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STAT

Warnke's Scalp

Carter's nomination of Paul Warnke to be head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and chief SALT negotiator is being interpreted as another weak signal to the Soviets, but we disagree. On this, we give Carter an A, and we hope his defense of the nomination merits the same. Warnke, far from being namby-pamby, is a strong advocate of a point of view on weaponry that is strategically prudent and ethically compelling. In contrast to those who insist we have to automatically increase the defense budget to show the Soviets we mean business, Warnke believes that we should buy what we need to accomplish our own objectives. He does oppose the B-1 bomber, the MX missile, the Trident submarine and more aircraft carriers—not because he is a unilateral disarmer, as charged, but because there are cheaper and better ways to protect national security. The very same philosophy is expressed by Carter's nominee to head the CIA, Admiral Stansfield Turner, whose selection is being cheered by many of the same people who want to sink Warnke.

The bitterest attacks on Warnke originate from a cluster of hardliners who failed to get Sen. Henry Jackson elected President and so far have failed to get any of their own number appointed to foreign policy jobs in the administration. There are plenty of positions in the administration suitable for a representative of the feisty Jacksonites. The post of chief arms control negotiator should be reserved for someone who's in favor of it.